

Message Text

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ACTION AF-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 IO-13 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05

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FM AMCONSUL JOHANNESBURG

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6983

INFO AMEMBASSY PRETORIA

AMCONSUL DURBAN

AMCONSUL CAPE TOWN

AMEMBASSY MASERU

AMEMBASSY GABORONE

AMEMBASSY MBABANE

AMEMBASSY MAPUTO

USMISSION USUN NEW YORK

AMEMBASSY LONDON

C O N F I D E N T I A L JOHANNESBURG 3085

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS, PINT, SF

SUBJECT: BLACK CONSCIOUSNESS RESURFACES IN SOWETO

REF: JOHANNESBURG 2809

1. POLOFF TALKED WITH ONE OF FOUNDING MEMBERS OF SOWETO ACTION COMMITTEE (SAC) THAMI MAZWAI CONCERNING EMERGENCE OF COALITION GROUPING OF REMNANTS OF BANNED BLACK ORGANIZATIONS. MAZWAI HAS RECENTLY BEEN DETAINED (REFTEL) AND RELEASED ON CHARGE OF OBSTRUCTING JUSTICE, HOWEVER, THIS IS APPARENTLY NOT RELATED TO HIS ACTIVITIES WITH THE ACTION COMMITTEE. MAZWAI SERVES THE ACTION COMMITTEE BOTH AS A FOUNDER AND EXECUTIVE MEMBER BUT HIS ROLE UNTIL NOW HAS BEEN KEPT IN THE BACKGROUND IN ORDER TO PROTECT HIM. MAZWAI WAS CURIOUS TO LEARN HOW REPORTING OFFICER LEARNED OF HIS INVOLVEMENT IN SAC
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(POLOFF WAS INFORMED BY AN SSRC MEMBER), REFLECTING EXTREME CAUTION BLACK POLITICAL ACTIVISTS ARE DISPLAYING IN WAKE OF OCT. 19 DETENTIONS. MOST OTHER MEMBERS OF THE ACTION COMMITTEE HAVE LIKEWISE HAD THEIR IDENTITIES PROTECTED WITH ONLY THE NAME OF THE ORGANIZATION'S CHAIRMAN, THE REVEREND LESIBA MALOTSE AND TWO OTHERS PUBLICIZED.

2. MAZWAI STATED THE REASON A RELATIVE UNKNOWN, THE REVEREND MALOTSE, WAS CHOSEN AS CHAIRMAN WAS THE ORGANIZATION SOUGHT A MOUTHPIECE WITH A CLEAN AND NON-CONTROVERSIAL BACKGROUND; SOMEONE WHO COULD ARTICULATE THE OBJECTIVES OF THE ACTION COMMITTEE WITHOUT FEAR OF BEING DETAINED OR LINKED WITH BANNED ORGANIZATIONS. MAZWAI EMPHASIZED THAT THE REVEREND MALOTSE IS ONLY INTENDED TO SERVE AS A SPOKESMAN AND IS NOT NECESSARILY THE ACTION COMMITTEE'S LEADER.

3. MAZWAI STATED THE ACTION COMMITTEE IS COMPOSED OF REMNANTS OF THE BANNED BLACK CONSCIOUSNESS ORGANIZATIONS AND SUPPORTS THE POLICIES OF THE COMMITTEE OF TEN AND SOWETO'S TEACHERS ACTION COMMITTEE. HE SAID THE GROUP IS DETERMINED TO PREVENT OTHER TOWNSHIP ORGANIZATIONS SUCH AS THE MAGOTLA, THE SOFASONKE, AND OTHER ORGANIZATIONS ALLEGEDLY REPRESENTING BLACK POLITICAL ASPIRATIONS FROM MOVING IN TO THE POWER VACUUM THAT EXISTS IN SOWETO IN WAKE OF THE BANNINGS AND DETENTIONS. THE SOWETO ACTION COMMITTEE WILL PROTEST RENT INCREASES AND WILL ATTEMPT TO BLOCK THE COMMUNITY COUNCILS. HE ALSO EMPHASIZED THE SOWETO ACTION COMMITTEE WILL SUPPORT THE STUDENTS IN THEIR BOYCOTT OF BANTU EDUCATION AND HOPEFULLY SET UP INDEPENDENT COMMUNITY SCHOOLS WHEN THE NEW SCHOOL TERM BEGINS.

4. MAZWAI EMPHASIZED THAT THE SOWETO ACTION COMMITTEE ONLY REGARDS ITSELF AS A TEMPORARY STAND-IN FOR THE DETAINED
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SOWETO LEADERSHIP. HE SAID MEMBERS OF THE SAC WILL BE LOYAL TO THE GOALS AND OBJECTIVES OF BLACK CONSCIOUSNESS BUT ALSO MUST BE WARY OF BECOMING TOO EXPOSED TO THE SOUTH AFRICAN GOVERNMENT. AS A BLACK CONSCIOUSNESS ORGANIZATION, THE SAC WILL RESIST ANC AND PAC ATTEMPTS TO EXPLOIT THE PRESENT SOWETO POWER VACUUM. (NOTE: MAZWAI EMPHASIZED THE SAC DOES NOT REGARD THE ANC AND PAC AS ENEMIES BUT RATHER AS HAVING DIFFERENT INTERESTS AND DIFFERENT PHILOSOPHIES IN TERMS OF LIBERATING BLACK SOUTH AFRICANS. MAZWAI HIMSELF STATED HE HAD SERVED TIME ON ROBBER ISLAND FOR WORK IN THE CAUSE OF THE PAC.)

5. IN RESPONSE TO A QUESTION AS TO WHO THE SAC HAS "GONE PUBLIC" MAZWAI INDICATED IT WAS TO PREEMPT SA GOVERNMENT CHARGES THAT THE SAC WAS A SUBVERSIVE ORGANIZATION, COUPLED WITH THE FACT THAT IT WAS CLEAR THE POLICE WERE ALREADY AWARE OF THE ACTIVITIES OF THE SAC. MAZWAI INDICATED THAT OVER TIME MORE MEMBERS OF THE SAC WILL PLAY ACTIVE PUBLIC ROLES AND BECOME LESS CAUTIOUS.

6. COMMENT: IT IS CLEAR THAT THE SAC REGARDS ITSELF AS A CARETAKER GROUP PENDING THE RELEASE OF OCT. 19 DETAINEES. MAZWAI EMPHASIZED THE GROUP SUPPORTED THE OBJECTIVES OF

THE COMMITTEE OF TEN AND THE TEACHERS ACTION COMMITTEE COMPLETELY BUT ALSO THEY WERE A BLACK CONSCIOUSNESS ORGANIZATION. THEY CLAIM TO HAVE THE SUPPORT OF THE SOWETO STUDENTS REPRESENTATIVE COUNCIL. HOWEVER, A SSRC MEMBER INDICATED IN A SEPARATE CONVERSATION THAT THE SSRC WAS AS YET UNFAMILIAR WITH THE ORGANIZATION OF THE SAC ALTHOUGH THEY HAD PLANS TO CONTACT SAC MEMBERS. ON THE SURFACE IT WOULD APPEAR THAT THE SAC AND SSRC WILL HAVE NO TROUBLE ACCOMMODATING AND REACHING AN AGREEMENT ON A COMMON SET OF PRINCIPLES.
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